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ABSTRACT

This review and synthesis of research on vocational education for older adults focuses on members of society in the sixty-five-and-older age group who have retired from the labor force but not from the productive population. The author addresses ways in which vocational educators can facilitate utilization of the resources represented by those in this age group through postretirement vocational education and training. Following are some of the topics discussed in this paper: factors in society affecting the potential number of labor force participants over age sixty-five; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (P.L. 95-256); Social Security Act Amendments; implications for full- or part-time paid employment; changing avocations into vocations; implications for volunteerism; implications for the consumer role; potential barriers to vocational programming for older adults; and programs and policies facilitating vocational education/training for older adults. (BM)

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Information Series No. 203

# VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

# FOR OLDER ADULTS

written by

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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National Center for Research in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
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- Generating knowledge through research
- Developing educational programs and products
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes
- Installing educational programs and products
- Operating information systems and services
- Conducting leadership development and training programs

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# FOREWORD

A segment of the population which is receiving greater recognition in terms of its potential contribution to society is the age group of 65 year old and older adults. This group, now numbering 24 million, is an increasing portion of the population. The life expectancy of these adults is improving and they are increasingly willing and able to work, although the proportion of retirees to active workers is increasing. With the passage of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1978, however, the mandatory retirement age for all workers has been raised from 65 to 70, allowing for more opportunity for older workers in the work force.

The implication of such facts for vocational educators is that the training needs of older workers may mean a reordering of present priorities. Vocational education has traditionally placed a strong emphasis on the training of youth. With the greater numbers of older adults in the population, more attention should be paid to their needs. More resources can be devoted to retraining older adults who are in the full-time work force or who are self-employed. In addition, vocational programs can be directed more successfully to the avocational interests which yield satisfying service, paraprofessional, or small business opportunities for older adults. This paper offers a proposed course of action for vocational educators in light of the greater impact older adults are having in our society.

"Vocational Education for Older Adults" is one of six interpretive papers produced during the second year of the National Center's knowledge transformation program. The review and synthesis in each topic area is intended to communicate knowledge and suggest applications. Papers in the series should be of interest to all vocational educators, including teachers, administrators, federal agency personnel, researchers, and the National Center staff.

The profession is indebted to Dr. Margaret A. Charters for her scholarship in preparing this paper. Recognition is due Dr. John Niemi, Northern Illinois University; Dr. Michael Sugerman, University of Akron; and Dr. Lorella A. McKinney, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, for their critical review of the manuscript. Dr. Carol P. Kowle supervised publication of the series. Mrs. Ann Kangas and Mrs. Margaret Starbuck assisted.

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

## INTRODUCTION

Aging is not just a process that belongs to the elderly. Manney (1975) describes aging as a complicated and poorly understood outcome of interrelated biological, psychological and cultural forces. Three fundamental concepts to be kept in mind when studying the aging are: (1) that aging has no chronological rules, as everyone ages in unique ways at individual rates; (2) that the interrelationships between the process of aging itself, society's attitudes toward older people, and the roles assigned to the elderly affect their intellectual performance, motivation, and interest in learning; and (3) that as a developmental process, aging cannot be understood in isolation from the other stages of life (Manney, 1975, p. 11). This study of vocational education for older adults focuses on members of society in the 65 and older age group. This group consists of those who have retired from the labor force but not from the productive population.

The purpose here is to address the ways in which vocational educators can facilitate the utilization of the resources represented by those 65 years of age and older. The demographic trends in the over 65 age group and other factors in American society that determine the size and nature of this resource pool are described. The potential for productivity of this population is discussed along with a proposed course of action by vocational educators and anticipated obstacles to its implementation. New developments leading to an increased use of this resource pool are reviewed, and recommendations for action are presented.

As the intent of this paper is to deal with postretirement vocational education and training, discussion is limited to consideration of the adult 65 years of age and older. While problems and issues cannot be limited to any specific chronological age, many issues described in the midcareer change literature apply to this older group as well. Age 65 is an appropriate cut off since it is used in much of the government statistical data, social security legislation, and in the landmark 1975 Harris study of older adults. The latter provides the most extensive data base available on older Americans' views and personal experiences of old age. Studies using age 55 and above are referred to when no other data are available.

## NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The population over age 65 represents a pool of human resources which can be harnessed for employment both inside and outside the traditional full-time labor force. Currently, this potential is

largely unrealized. Vocational educators have the opportunity to help in making better use of these human resources. The best expertise for training in the types of activities people engage in as paid workers, as volunteers, and in the household economy, is available from the field of vocational education.

## Demographics of the Population Over 65 Years of Age

The population over 65 years of age in America constitutes a significantly large and growing segment of our population because of both a longer average life span and a lower birth rate, according to estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In July 1978, there were 24,054,000 adults over the age of 65, 11 percent of the total population. Fifty-nine percent of this age group is female; 41 percent is male. A woman reaching age 65 today can expect to live an additional 17.5 years--a man, 13.4 years. Starting at 3.1 million in 1900, the 65 and over age group tripled by 1940, doubled again by 1979, and is expected to be about 31 million by the year 2000, a tenfold increase in this century. By the time the post-World War II baby boom reaches 65 years of age in the decade 2010-2020, it is estimated that the number of adults 65 years of age and over will approach 50 million.

The educational level of older people is still well below that of the overall adult population. In 1975, about 35 percent of the persons 65 and older were high school graduates, as compared to about 62 percent of all adults 25 years old or older. The educational level of all adults is rising, however. By 1990, about 50 percent of those 65 and over are expected to be high school graduates (Gross, Gross, and Seidman, 1978).

The median income of families headed by a 65 year old or older adult was $9,110 in 1977. The income distribution of this group as reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census is shown in table 1. Although 3.2 million persons over 65 were below the poverty level in 1977, 14 percent of those over 65 were below the poverty level as compared to 11 percent of those under 65. The 1977 nonfarm poverty threshold for one person 65 years or older was $2,906; for two persons 65 or older, it was $3,666.

In 1977, 2,764,000 persons over the age of 65 were employed in the total labor force. This represented 3 percent of the total employed labor force and 12.4 percent of the total population over 65 years of age. Close to 20 percent of the men and 8 percent of the women age 65 or over participated in the labor force in 1977. The ratio of active workers to retirees, roughly estimated by comparing the number of citizens age 18-64 to those over age 65, was approximately 6:1 in July 1978. By the year 2030,

TABLE 1. Distribution of families with head 65 years old and over by total money income in 1977 (as of March 1978).

| Income | Families with Heads 65+ Percentage | No. in Thousands |
|---|---|---|
| 0 - 4,999 | 17 | 1,401 |
| 5,000 - 6,999 | 18 | 1,448 |
| 7,000 - 9,999 | 20 | 1,676 |
| 10 000 - 14,999 | 20 | 1,601 |
| 15,000 - 19,999 | 10 | 842 |
| 20,000 - 24,999 | 6 | 485 |
| 25,000 and above | 9 | 759 |
| | 100 | 8,212 |

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. "Characteristics of the Population Below the Poverty Level: 1977." Current Population Reports. Consumer Income Series P-60, No. 119. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1978.

this ratio of active to retired citizens is expected to be approximately 3:1.

The 1975 Harris survey for the National Council on Aging found that among the 21 million Americans aged 65 and older at that time, 2.5 million were working full or part time; 4.0 million, nearly 20 percent of the total, were not working but said they wanted to work; 4.5 million were working as volunteers; and 2.1 million were not volunteering but were interested in doing so.

The 2.5 million workers in the Harris survey represented 12 percent of the public 65 years old and older, 3 percent of full-time workers, and 9 percent of part-time workers. Employment rates were higher among people 65-69 years of age than among those over 69; 18 percent of those 65-69 were employed, 4 percent full time and 14 percent part time. People age 65 and older who continued

to work full or part time were involved in the following occupations: 18 percent were managers, officials, or proprietors; 17 percent were service workers; 15 percent were operatives or unskilled laborers; 11 percent were skilled craftsmen or foremen; and 10 percent were professionals and clerical workers. Higher proportions of older people than of younger people are employed as managers, officials or proprietors, sales workers, service workers, and farmers. The survey also showed that those 65 and older compete for or hold jobs in all categories of work. Categories where part-time work is possible gain in importance with age.

The survey showed that 63 percent of the individuals in this age group were retired. At least 20 percent would consider returning to work if asked to take on a new job that suited them (L. Harris and Associates, 1975). In a similar report, Skogland (1979) noted that among Swedish retirees, 29 percent of the fully retired reported they missed working.

According to the most recent Harris survey of current employees and retirees, released in February 1979, 51 percent of the employees surveyed wanted to continue working in some capacity rather than retire, 48 percent of those who had retired would prefer to be working, and 53 percent of the retirees wish they had never quit (NCOCOA, 1979). Of those retired and wishing to work, the increase from 20 percent to 48 percent over a five-year period suggests an increase in the desire of the older population to continue working.

In summary, the age group under discussion includes approximately 24 million people. This group is an increasing portion of our population. The level of education is increasing, and only 14 percent of the group is below the poverty level. The life expectancy is improving, and the group is increasingly able and willing to work, although the proportion of retirees to active workers is increasing. Research on 600,000 California retired persons indicated the great majority are busy, relatively happy, and believe themselves to be in good health (Grabowski and Mason, n.d., p. 146).

## Factors in Society Affecting the Potential Number of Labor Force Participants Over Age 65

Four major factors affect the potential number of labor force participants in the population over age 65. These factors include passage of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, passage of the Social Security Act amendments, inflation, and health. Each of these factors will be summarized below.

## The Age Discrimination in Employment Act

The 1978 amendment to the Older Americans Act (P.L. 95-256), which has become known as the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), constitutes a major piece of legislation affecting the retirement of those 65 years of age and older. As of October 11, 1978, forced retirement of federal workers was ended. The mandatory retirement age for other workers was raised to 70 beginning January 1, 1979, with three exceptions:

a. Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement in effect September 1977 will not be affected by this amendment until January 1, 1980, or the date the contract terminates.

b. Compulsory retirement of tenured college or university employees between ages 65 and 70 is not prohibited until July 1, 1982.

c. Bona fide executives or those in high policy-making positions entitled to retirement benefits in excess of $27,000 (excluding social security and some other benefits) are excluded.

The effect of this act is to extend by five years the length of time that older adults may work without being subject to mandatory retirement. The effect this legislation will have on those who will continue to work past age 65 is not clear. Reports from industry are contradictory. Some companies with retirement ages above 65 report only 10 percent of the work force want to continue beyond 65. Fewer than 2 percent of Kaiser Aluminum employees, for example, chose to work beyond 65 (Lawson, 1979). Seven percent of auto workers continue past age 65. On the other hand, reports from Sears, Roebuck and Company, Polaroid, and several insurance companies which have introduced flexible retirement plans, indicate that at least 50 percent of workers reaching age 65 remain on the job (Sonnenfeld, 1978, p. 82). Type of occupation may be an important factor in the retirement decision. At the same time, statistics show a downward trend in the retirement age. Discouraged job seekers, for example, may settle for an inadequate but early retirement income. The 1975 Harris survey reports that 65 percent of those who are retired expressed no interest in resuming work.

On the other hand, some employers may encourage workers to continue on the job. An important factor affecting timing of retirement is the increasing pressure on retirement systems. CBS has reported that it costs less to retain an older worker than to pay the retired workers' pension and replacement salary (Lawson, 1979). As the impact of the post-World War II baby boom passes, the pressure to leave the work force imposed by high unemployment

levels among younger workers may be lessened. Rones (1978) thinks it unlikely that ADEA will have a large short-run effect on the employment of workers in general, but that in the long run it may have a substantial effect on the types of work arrangements available to older workers.

Responsibility for enforcement of ADEA has been transferred from the Department of Labor to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It is still too early to determine the effect of this new legislation.

## Social Security Act Amendments

The 1977 Amendments to the Social Security Act include several changes which might prolong the involvement of older people in the work force primarily by increasing the monetary incentive to work. The retirement deferral credit, which provides a credit for a worker who defers receiving retirement benefits after age 65, has been increased from 1 percent to 3 percent per year. The amount of money that a person may earn after retirement before forfeiting social security benefits (currently $4,500) will be raised to a maximum of $6,000 in 1982, encouraging substantial part-time employment. Also, the age beyond which there is no limit to the amount one can earn and still receive full social security benefits will be lowered to age 70 by 1982, removing all financial disincentive to employment at that age.

## Inflation

Inflation has always been a problem for those on fixed incomes. Even with cost of living adjustments to social security benefits, the current double digit rate of inflation and prices of necessities drain the economic resources of older adults. More adults over 65 may be pushed back into the job market for economic reasons. Assets are being consumed at an unanticipated rate. There are only three alternatives: (1) lower the standard of living, (2) increase income or improve money management, and (3) adjust consumption patterns to maintain living levels with less expenditure. The attempt to increase income may be reflected in either a search for employment or a delay in retirement.

## Health

Continuing advances in the medical field would seem to support the hypothesis that the health of persons over 65 will improve. Currently, most surveys show that health is the major factor in retirement decisions. Improved health should, therefore, lead to

an increase of those remaining in the work force. In the 1975 Harris study, 57 percent of the participants cited health as the major reason for retirement. There is considerable evidence to suggest, however, that the influence of this factor may be exaggerated. This may be due to both the pressure from a work-oriented society to cite health rather than a desire for leisure as a cause for retirement, and workers' unwillingness to cite the lack of job availability as a factor in retirement decision making.

All four factors--passage of ADEA, passage of amendments to the Social Security Act, an increase in the rate of inflation, and improvements in health care--have the potential to increase the number of labor force participants over age 65.

The potential for productivity of the over 65 age group exists among those participating in paid employment, in unpaid employment in the household economy, and in the community as volunteers. As 10 percent of this population group is currently employed, the greatest opportunity for increasing productivity lies outside full-time paid employment.

## PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATORS

To place the relationship between vocational educators and the aging in a new perspective, it is helpful to recapture the historical meaning of the word "vocational." Before the Protestant reformation, the term "vocation" meant "calling." At that time, the only calling was the religious life. Other more mundane occupations, such as shoemaker, tavernkeeper, or jurist, were not described as "callings." They were simply ways in which people made their livings. Luther himself extended the idea of calling or vocation to include jobs performed by ordinary people (Green, 1973).

This extension of the term vocation to include jobs has narrowed the age span associated with it. The idea of vocation is now associated with the job one works at in a full-time, paid capacity. Recapturing the idea of vocation as life-long calling will enable the vocational educator to consider the work of the individual during an entire lifetime, including part-time, volunteer, and domestic occupations engaged in past the usual retirement age. Marvin Feldman, president of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, makes a similar appeal to vocational educators. Feldman asks that vocational educators train students not just for jobs, but for work in the broadest sense of vocation, even with a capacity to create their own work (Feldman, 1978). This thinking is similar to the philosophy of career education which stresses the importance of people developing to

their fullest capability. Career education extends the idea of work beyond the concept of paid employment, as Hoyt expresses it, to "the work of the student (adult) as a learner, to the growing numbers of volunteer workers in our society, to the work of the full-time homemaker and to work activities in which one engages as part of leisure and/or recreational time" (Hoyt, n.d., p. 6).

In light of the above commentary, two recommendations are offered to vocational educators relative to the training of 65 and older adults. First, it is suggested that vocational educators devote more resources to retraining those in the 65 and older age group who are in the full-time work force or who are self-employed. Second, it is suggested that vocational educators expand their educational contribution to include the entire range of work older adults are capable of doing. The implications of these suggestions for vocational education programming are examined in the following section.

## Implications for Full- or Part-Time Paid Employment

In 1977, 2.8 million people over 65 were employed. Even if the additional number not working but wanting to is included, the group is small compared to the total labor force. About one-third of those who retire return to the job market for economic or psychological reasons. Social security officials report that more retired people than ever are going back to work and their income from working equals that from social security (N. A. Sheppard, 1979b, p. 27).

Almost every occupational title has been suggested for those over 65, although there is some indication of a special compatability with peers and children. Older adults should be integrated into traditional retraining programs in vocational education with some adaptation. There is no real need for unique programs to serve older adults. Vocational education's commitment to individualized instruction is a major asset for mainstreaming the over 65 adult into already existing educational programs.

## Changing Avocations into Vocations

Enrollment of the elderly in vocational programs for avocational reasons should be encouraged, as an avocational interest often becomes a vocational one. Parks (1973) cites a case of a retired air force colonel and his wife, who combined experience with an interest in gardening and courses in agricultural education to develop a business utilizing four greenhouses to produce bedding plants and landscape plant materials. Hiring unemployed persons to help them, the couple raised 100 head of beef cattle and managed 850 acres of land for timber.

Any craft fair provides examples of avocational pursuits converted to small businesses, perhaps with information gained from a vocational education program. Similarly, a person's interest in serving others, with some training, may become the basis of a career as a community service paraprofessional.

## Implications for Volunteerism

The impact of volunteerism is seldom considered in monetary terms, although it has been estimated that if counted, volunteer activity would increase the gross national product by $30 billion annually by the year 1980. The 1971 White House Conference on Aging suggested that the use of older Americans as volunteers in agencies should be adopted as policy. Vocational education could make a contribution to such an effort.

The volunteer force at the time of the 1975 Harris study was 4.5 million, or 22 percent of the population over 65 years of age. An additional 10 percent of those 65 years or age or older would like to volunteer their services, making a potential volunteer force of 6.6 million people in 1975. Approximately one-third of those with incomes of $7,000 or more and 42 percent of those with college educations do volunteer work. The types of volunteering that older people most often do include (1) health and mental health services such as working in hospitals and clinics, in programs for the emotionally ill, or in disease prevention programs; (2) transportation services, such as driving older adults who are ill, handicapped persons, or others in need; (3) civic affairs, including psychological and social support services, such as visiting the homebound, participating in programs in nursing homes, and participating in outreach programs, hot-line counseling, and telephone reassurance for shut-ins; (4) give-away programs providing emergency food, clothing, and household equipment; and (5) family, youth, and child oriented services such as programs for foster children, teaching home management skills, working in residential facilities for dependent children, and helping to provide day care services.

Training for volunteerism as a second career, sometimes referred to as service recreation, is scarcely mentioned in the vocational education literature, despite the expertise present in such areas as home economics and distributive education. At least one project, however, makes use of retired adults as volunteers in the vocational system. Project ASSERT (Activity to Support the Strengthening of Education Through Retired Technicians), at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, has been funded by the U.S. Office of Education's Administration on Aging, Office of Human Development. It involves using retired technicians as volunteers to strengthen postsecondary occupational education. The project provides the opportunity for retirees to

make a transition from full-time employment to a functional retirement. In the process, they contribute their resources to enriching and strengthening vocational education by providing realistic career guidance, instruction, and assistance with job placement for students in two community colleges. The only other similar program is the Retired Volunteer Service Corps outside Washington, D.C. There is the potential for other such projects within vocational education.

## Implications for the Consumer Role

The entire cohort of those over 65 years of age, with the exception of the 5 percent that are institutionalized, is involved in the consumer role. It would seem logical for vocational education to place an increased emphasis on retraining and updating for more efficiency among older adults in that role. A group at the Rand Corporation (Bell et al., 1976), in studying the role of education in adapting to technological change, included consideration of the family, consumer, citizen, and other career roles of the individual. The authors of the study concluded that as a result of rapid technological change and the proliferation of consumer products and information, older adults may suffer a deterioration of competence in their consumer role. Technological change that might benefit the nutritional status of aging persons is particularly important as it affects their health. Greater efficiency in obtaining social and medical services, transportation, and housing and household services would assist older adults in adapting to retirement (Bell et al., 1976).

A study by the Southern California Community College Institutional Research Association (Galvin et al., 1975) found that potential students over 55 had a major interest in consumer and homemaking education. The subjects rated as most important were hobby and recreational, health related, consumer education and nutrition, and supplemental income. Those surveyed urged community colleges to emphasize coping better with daily problems of health and finance and training for volunteer service. Final recommendations also stressed the importance of postretirement employment opportunities (Galvin et al., 1975; Grabowski and Mason, n.d.).

Montgomery (1973) provides specific suggestions on how some areas of specialization within home economics can be adapted to serve older adults. Cross (1979) calls for better targeting to older adults in her chart for the future of consumer and homemaking education. Cross' recognition of the past emphasis on middle-class and full-time homemakers in consumer and homemaking education could have included the elderly, although it did not. Vocational education programmers need to be reminded that the

population over 65 years of age represents all segments of the population, all classes, and all income levels.

## POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR OLDER ADULTS

### The Need for a Broad View of Vocational Education

The majority of the elderly don't hold full-time paid jobs. To the extent that vocational educators focus on preparation and training for full-time paid employment, they tend not to be concerned with the needs of the population over age 65.

Stevens (1979), in analyzing the potential for coordinating vocational education programs with CETA, comments that vocational education has demonstrated "an evolving youth focus of employment and training programs" (p. 14) and is being made to "focus resources more and more narrowly on economically disadvantaged persons" (p. 19). Such a focus on disadvantaged youth, if it continues, could detract from a focus on the needs of older adults. Historically and currently there is much support for a broad interpretation of vocational education. A reexamination of some of the vocational educational legislation bears out this mandate for wider educational programming, which must be implemented if vocational educators are to serve the aging.

Historically, vocational education began with the Morrill Acts which authorized the establishment of the land grant colleges. The purpose of the acts was very generally stated to promote the practical and liberal education of the industrial classes. Because the land grant institutions did not train the farm and factory workers needed at that time, the Smith Hughes Act of 1917 was designed to promote vocational education in the fields of agriculture, home economics, trades, and industry. Its purpose was to "fit individuals for useful employment" which was narrowly construed to "meet the needs of those prepared to enter the work of a farm, trade or industrial pursuit" (Thompson, 1973, p. 107).

The concept of vocational education has broadened since that time. In terms of funding, there has been a trend away from categorical funding to more general fiscal support. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P.L. 88-210) includes in its purpose vocational training or retraining for individuals for gainful employment in "recognized" occupations (Part A, Sec. 8[1]). In Title II of the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482), the definition of vocational education is expanded further to include paid or unpaid employment. Its reference to additional preparation for a career emphasizes updating and retraining.

The 1968 vocational amendments (P.L. 90-576) authorized educational programs under Part F, which encouraged home economists to prepare adults as well as youth for the dual role of homemaker and wage-earner and to include consumer education. The Education Amendments of 1976 recognized homemaking as an occupation and expanded programs to be emphasized and educational levels to be included in vocational education. The amendments identify consumer and homemaking programs as follows:

> Educational programs in consumer and homemaking education consisting of instructional programs services and activities at all education levels for the occupations of homemaking, including but not limited to consumer education, food and nutrition, family living and parenthood education, child development and guidance, housing and home management (including resource management) and clothing and textiles (emphasis added). (P.L. 94-482, 90 STAT 2196, Subpart 5, Section 150 [1976])

Federal vocational education legislation thus provides a rationale for meeting the needs of the older adult beyond the need for a return to or continuation of paid employment.

While vocational education legislation provides for the education of persons of all ages, at levels below the baccalaureate degree, the Education Amendments of 1976 to the Higher Education Act of 1965 refer to opportunities for vocational development and define lifelong learning for other educational levels. The law includes:

> adult basic education, continuing education, independent study, agricultural education and labor education, occupational education and job training programs, parent education, postsecondary education, pre-retirement and education for older and retired people (emphasis added). (P.L. 94-482, 90 STAT 2087 [1976])

The 1979 amendments to Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HR 4531, 96th Congress, 1st session [1979]) also emphasize the provision of education and training opportunities for all citizens throughout life, in both traditional and nontraditional settings. There is ample justification in the legislation for service to older adults in paid as well as unpaid employment and in both their life and their work roles.

## Attitudes Toward Older Adults

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights conducted a study of unreasonable discrimination on the basis of age in the administration of ten federal programs, including the state vocational education

basic grant program. Discrimination on the basis of age was found to exist in each of the programs examined. Especially noted were vocational education and CETA programs (N. A. Sheppard, 1979a). Motivated by this report, in 1975 Sheppard conducted a survey of secondary and postsecondary teachers in Virginia representing all vocational service areas. He reports:

> Vocational educators as a group appeared concerned with the problems of the elderly, felt the problems were a proper concern of vocational education as a profession. They were somewhat unconvinced of the suitability of present programs of vocational education for older people. They overwhelmingly felt that service to the aged has not been and is not now a high priority item within vocational education. Finally, the survey revealed that there were not a large number of vocational education programs specifically designed for the aged in operation at the time nor were there any definite plans in existence for future offerings. (N. A. Sheppard, 1979a, p. 46)

Eighty percent of those surveyed denied negative feelings about working with persons 60 years and older, yet when questioned more closely, 33 percent indicated they would prefer working with young people, and 30 percent were indecisive. Slightly more than half indicated they would be interested in implementing programs (Sheppard and Mintz, 1977). Sheppard also reports that vocational educators see the aged as a special clientele with unique needs and interests (N. A. Sheppard, 1979a, p. 46). This may suggest that vocational educators are inclined toward age stereotyping, or "ageism," although generalizations cannot be drawn on the basis of one study. At the same time, Schram and Osten (1978) report strong personal biases against aged clientele of CETA planners they surveyed. Such attitudes hinder effective programming to meet the employment needs of older adults.

To achieve successful and creative programming for the elderly, enthusiasm must be generated along with a conviction that people age 65 and older are not only potentially productive in paid and unpaid employment but that it is a serious waste of economic resources to have these human resources remain unused.

## Myths About the Job Performance of Older Adults

Another obstacle to vocational education planning for those over 65 is the fear that they will not perform well on the job. Most myths about the job performance of older adults have been dispelled by research and development, but stereotypes persist. A survey of Harvard Business Review readers in 1977 indicated that managerial decision making is still affected by age stereotyping. Sonnenfeld (1978) provides a summary of research findings on the

job performance of older workers which challenges age stereotypes in relation to job performance. If the work curves are bell-shaped over the life cycle, peaks reported in the 50s should mean that performance levels in the 60s are similar to those in the 40s. Among the research findings, which are not limited to the over-65 age group, are the following:

- Physiological changes identified with old age vary greatly between individuals of the same age.
- The age-related changes in the sensory processes appear gradually and many can be controlled by modern medical treatment.
- Although certain effects on reaction time appear, when not under time pressure, the performance of older people is as good if not better than that of younger people.
- Older decision makers tend to take longer to make decisions but evaluate new information more accurately.
- Bi-modal distributions of innovativeness appear in studies of professionals with second peaks appearing as late as 55-60 years of age.
- Age appears as an asset, if a factor at all, in sales performance as reported by insurance companies, auto dealers, and large department stores.
- Studies showed little effect of age on manual workers with great variation within age groups.
- No significant difference in output by age was found in a major study of government and industry office workers. (Sonnenfeld, 1978, pp. 85-88).

Sonnenfeld also reports on the experience of companies which have never adopted mandatory retirement policies yet have continued to be profitable and efficient with workers in their 70s and 80s. Ferle Inc., owned by General Foods, employs workers whose average age is 71. Sales workers at Macy's have never had to conform to a mandatory retirement age and have demonstrated no apparent decline in performance attributable to age. Banker's Life and Casualty retains top executives, clerks, and secretaries 65 and older, and 3.5 percent of the workers in their home office are over 65. Polaroid has found that those employees who choose to remain on the job after 65 tend to be better performers (Sonnenfeld, 1978).

The Federal Council on Aging's Institute of Industrial Gerontology also concludes from an extensive survey of the literature

that while the physical demands of most jobs are well below the capacity of most older workers, there is great variation among individuals. If workers are properly placed, they have greater stability, fewer accidents, and less time lost than younger workers (Ossofsky, 1976).

Performance appraisal and job counseling of individuals is important in matching an employee's skill with the company's job opportunities. Chronological age has never been a valid means of measuring a worker's performance, but it is now illegal. It is increasingly important to define jobs in terms of performance standards and use them for employment criteria to avoid age-discrimination suits. By developing curricula around job performance standards, vocational educators can better prepare students for employment and avoid age stereotyping at the same time.

## Difficulties in Job Placement

A lack of job opportunities was considered a moderately serious problem for approximately 25 percent of both employed and retired people over 65 in the 1975 Harris survey. Skogland (1979) concludes from his study of Swedish workers that many retirees stop working because of employment discrimination. The Federal Council on Aging made two studies of the U.S. Employment Service and found that the percentage of an age group receiving a particular service, such as job referrals and placement, declines as age increases. Those under 22 received the highest percentage of services and those over 65 received the least (Ossofsky, 1976). This pattern of discrimination is in part attributable to the fact that employment service employees' achievement is based on the number of placements, and they find that older workers need twice as many referrals before they are placed (Manney, 1975). For effective counseling and placement, it is necessary to use specific information about the individual worker. One of the best known systems for matching older adults and jobs by profiles is based on general physique, evaluation of upper and lower extremities, hearing, sight, mentality, and personality called GULHEMP. This federal project placed 4,000 workers over five years without a workmen's compensation accident, with no reduction in productivity, and with a decrease in absenteeism (McGuire, 1978). Despite its success as a pilot program, it was not a high government priority and did not receive further funding.

Job counseling is at the heart of employment services for older adults. Proper counseling requires an understanding of the circumstances and characteristics of the aging as well as the traditional skills of vocational guidance. Peer counseling is universally recommended. DeCrow (1978) reports that studies indicate many employers fear any generalized commitment to older workers,

but that they respond to limited and feasible action. He further reports that some community-based agencies extend job development along several promising lines: leasing, job sharing, and job creation. Other related activities from which employment services might draw are skill banks, community work centers, community-based senior employment centers, educational brokerage centers, and women's centers. According to DeCrow, employment projects for older adults are still too new to have detailed the criteria for precisely evaluating their utility or the basis for permanent funding commitments.

The community college projects of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation report that jobs for older adults exist but are hard to find. Thus, job development and referral remain an important challenge in the employment of the older adult (NPO/Task Force, 1977). This area is one worth exploring by vocational guidance personnel, perhaps employing the older adult in the process.

## Fears About the Ability of Older Adults to Adapt to Technological Change

The rate of knowledge expansion and speed of technological change in this country require constant updating of information and skills for individuals to deal with the changing environment. In 1976, the Rand Corporation undertook a major study of the role of education in facilitating adaptation to technological change. The authors developed a formal theoretical model by which the problem could be defined and applied this model to several selected groups, including the elderly. The model considered the problem of adaptation for work, family, consumer, citizen, and other roles in which educational activity is potentially instrumental. The authors defined the rate of technological change by the "amount of time an individual requires to learn new information relevant to the enactment of specific roles, therefore weighing the importance of new technology by adaptational requirements" (Bell et al., 1976, p. 13). They found that if the rate of technological change is interpreted in this way, the role of the educational system is to improve the processing of information on new roles and transitions to these roles in order to increase an individual's adaptive ability (Bell et al., 1976).

The ability of adults to adapt to technological change becomes a matter of their ability to learn. The learning ability of adults has been studied extensively, and, although caution must be exercised in applying findings based on group means, such studies indicate that when the capacity of primary memory is exceeded, age is a deterrent. In fast-paced situations or when conditions exist contrary to established habits or preconceived notions, the older learner may be at a disadvantage (Arenberg and Robertson, n.d.). Gardner and Monge (1977) refute the concept that

cognitive abilities for all variables peak between 20 and 30 and go down after the age of 30. They find that age is no more important in cognitive functioning than the level of prior education and sex of the student. Change in cognitive functioning does not seem to be related to age as much as to interest or experience, either past or present (Gardner and Monge, 1977). Those over 65 exhibit the same dispersion of ability as is found in any age group. Any abrupt decline in mental process is usually an indication of serious health problems. Certainly those over 65 today have adapted to tremendous change during their lifetime and they are continuing to learn.

The 1975 Harris study examined the attitudes of those over 65 toward retraining. Fifteen percent would be at least somewhat interested in job retraining or in learning new skills if given the opportunity. Approximately 400,000 people, or 2 percent of those 65 and over, reported being enrolled in an educational institution or taking courses. Those most likely to be enrolled were those who had already achieved high levels of education. Those taking courses did so for the following reasons: 76 percent to expand general knowledge about some field or hobby; 6 percent to acquire job skills; 39 percent to make good use of time; 28 percent to be with people; and 2 percent for other reasons. The major reason for people of all ages being enrolled or taking courses was to expand general knowledge about some field or hobby. Education is beginning to be seen as a way of meeting the needs and objectives of the present rather than a preparatory activity (Bell et al., 1976). This shift in educational philosophy is particularly important to those who are planning programs for older adults.

## Fears About Volunteers Replacing Members of the Work Force

Full-time paid workers should have little to fear in regard to volunteers replacing them. Victor Gotbaum, a labor leader, comments, "Second career opportunities and increasing options for part-time work for retirees and older citizens can only become real alternatives on a meaningful scale if there is an otherwise full employment economy" (Gotbaum and Barr, 1976, p. 51). He further states that "the idea of volunteerism must be 'cleaned up'; its pre-professional middle-class aura must be lifted, its noblesse oblige history must be reopened and its danger as a cheap labor source must be entirely removed" (p. 51).

The Older Volunteer Project of the Andrus Gerontology Center at UCLA has worked to improve the image of older volunteers in the work force. The project utilized 40 volunteers aged 49 to 78 years of age. It demonstrated that retired adults can enter an organization that employs mostly paid, nonretired personnel,

generate work, and gain acceptance in that work setting (Seguin, and O'Brien, 1976).

## PROGRAMS AND POLICIES FACILITATING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION/TRAINING FOR OLDER ADULTS

### Federal Mandates for Employment and Education for Older Adults

Funding opportunities exist under several legislative mandates which can be utilized for programs concerning older adults. These opportunities are detailed in the following paragraphs.

The Vocational Education Act of 1963, in its declaration of purpose, authorizes grants to states "to maintain, extend and improve existing programs of vocational education, to develop new programs of vocational education . . . so that persons of all ages . . . will have ready access to vocational training or retraining which is of high quality . . ." (P.L. 88-210, 77 STAT, Part A, Sec 1 [1963]). An Office Management and Budget (OMB) report on the distribution of funds under this act shows "that of the amount available for distribution to the states, 50 percent is based on the age group 15-19; 20 percent on the age range 20-24; 15 percent on the age interval 25-65 and the prior distribution" (Stevens, 1979, p. 5). This would indicate that the majority of the funding is reserved for younger age groups. Little if any is designated for those over age 65.

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Title I, Administrative Provisions; Title II, Comprehensive Employment and Training Services; Title III, Special Federal Responsibilities which includes programs for displaced homemakers and older workers; and Title VI, Countercyclical Public Service Employment Programs, all suggest numerous opportunities for creative vocational educators to be involved in programs for older adults. The fact that older adults have been neglected is indicated by the 1977 tightening of the CETA regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age. Schram and Osten (1978), in their analysis of CETA and the aging, comment: "Our analysis of CETA program placements for the aging indicates that CETA's response to the employment needs of the aging ranges from bad to worse; CETA programs normally perform badly in serving the aging, and the performance of 'hold harmless' prime sponsors is worse" (p. 171).

The Education Amendments of 1978 to the Higher Education Act Title I (the Adult Education Act) state:

> The rapid pace of social, economic and technological change has created pressing needs for education programs which focus on the retraining and continuing education of non-traditional students in all stages of life. (b) The Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States that to make education and training opportunities available to all citizens throughout life and to remove any barriers to such opportunities posed by previous education or training, age, sex, race, handicap, national origin or economic circumstances (emphasis added). . . . The purpose is to expand educational opportunity for adults . . . to make available the means to secure training that will enable them to become more employable, productive and responsible students. (P.L. 95-561, 92 STAT 2356, Section 101 [1978])

The legislation also specifically refers to cooperation with state programs under CETA, the Older Americans Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, the Vocational Education Act, the Career Education Incentive Act, and all other state level activities assisted by the Higher Education Act of 1965 and other federal laws intended to provide outreach, guidance, counseling, educational, and occupational information to persons within the state (Sec. 102b).

The Older Americans Act of 1965 (Title V of the 1978 Amendments), known as the Older American Community Service Employment Act, (42USCA, Sec. 3056(a), Supp. 79) raised the eligibility requirements for community service employment to 125 percent of the poverty income level. The objective of this piece of legislation as stated in Section 502a of the Act itself is to provide "useful part-time opportunities in community service activities for unemployed low income persons who are 55 years old and who have poor employment prospects" (p. 284). The employment opportunities provided must result in an increase over those otherwise available, no displacement of currently employed workers, and the substitution of federal funds for other funds in connection with work that would otherwise be performed. The Senior Community Service Project (SCSP) is a work experience manpower model for the older disadvantaged. It is funded by the Department of Labor (DOL), and administered by the Federal Council on Aging under contracts authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act. It was designed "to provide communities with a federally subsidized manpower pool that can be drawn upon to upgrade existing human services or to establish new ones--and to enable older persons thus employed to become contributing rather than dependent members of society" (Davis and Taylor, 1975, p. 122).

In 1974, an analysis revealed that almost three fifths of the previous year's enrollees were over 65 years of age. More than one in three of those terminated were placed in permanent employment. The program met the needs of the over 55 low income

population to gain additional income, regain a sense of involvement with the community, upgrade skills, and enter the work force. Senior Community Service Project (SCSP) participants were assigned work experience training placements with public or private nonprofit agencies. In addition to achieving the stated program objectives by developing "new careers," the program provided consumer related information in areas of nutrition, consumer education, and financial management. Placements were made in a variety of human service agencies. One third of the participants were employed in subprofessional positions in personal service areas such as homemaker service, escort/visitor service, recruitment, information referral and counseling, social work, thriftshop/clothing services, home start, and home repair. Evaluation of the program showed that the older adult participants were unusually effective working with their peers, especially in crisis situations (Davis and Taylor, 1975).

The Department of Labor also funds similar national contracts with the National Farmers' Union (Green Thumb) which involves older rural residents in highway beautification and other outdoors programs, and with the National Council of Senior Citizens (Senior Aides), the National Retired Teachers Association/American Association of Retired Persons (Senior Community Service Aides), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forestry Service (Operation Mainstream). The National Retired Teachers Association/American Association of Retired Persons (NRTA/AARP), in evaluating its program, found that enrollees were on the payroll an average of 47 weeks before permanent employment was offered and accepted. They commented that if the 1,700 ex-enrollees placed in permanent jobs during the 1974-1976 contract had earned minimum wage (and they had earned more than minimum wage) the net economic gain would have been approximately $18.5 million (Borzilleri, 1979). Despite this, according to Schram and Osten (1978), the federal government provided only token funding.

Although the programs under this legislation all require participants to indicate their income level, similar programs might be developed by vocational educators for other income groups of older adults where skills might be upgraded for paid or volunteer employment.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, Title II, includes funding for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent, a one-to-one help program that puts men and women over 60 to work with institutionalized children, and Senior Companion programs. In addition, the Small Business Administration sponsors the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and International Executive Service Corps (IESC) both of which utilize retired executives as consultants for businesses.

The Public Works and Economic Development Act Title X programs designed to develop labor intensive projects with minimum capital for employment opportunities during economic recessions can be used as examples of programs for older workers. One program developed in western Kentucky hired persons 65 and over to work as homemakers or home repairers. Participants were given home health aide training at local community colleges and home repair training by the state vocational training school.

In conclusion, Senator Edward Kennedy's (D-Massachusetts) comments might well be generalized to programs under all these pieces of legislation:

> The enthusiastic acceptance of these programs . . . strongly suggests that there are many low income older persons and retirees in virtually every community willing and able to perform services. Greater utilization of their talents, experience and knowledge would benefit not only the elderly job seeker, but the general public as well. (Kennedy, 1970, p. S3891.3)

Vocational educators need to be aware of all the programs for older adults in their own communities and be alert to the opportunities for developing similar programs both for those who meet the income requirement for participation in on-going programs and those who do not. Several programs exist which could utilize vocational education for effective implementation of second careers for the elderly. For example, in Boulder, Colorado, a program assists elderly retarded patients in state hospitals. In Winnetka, Illinois, another program involves one-to-one work with underachieving youth. In Clearwater, Florida, a program for employment of older adults focuses on recreation and legal services information. In Orleans, Vermont, older adults help keep rural libraries open. In Maine, older adults are involved in food services programs. In Burlington, Vermont, there are consumer education programs for older adults, and in Kentucky, older adults are involved in home improvement.

## Private Programs for Employment and Education/ Training for Older Adults

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation is the major private funder of programs for retired older adults. Its philosophy is that older people are an underutilized resource. Major objectives of the foundation are to help involve retired adults in significant community service; to help return older citizens to the job market; to service education and training needs to fill jobs; to build resources of community colleges; and to have grantees

continue projects after the Foundation terminates support (NPO/Task Force, 1977).

The foundation has invested over $100 million in projects in the last five years. Projects are listed in Older Americans: An Untapped Resource (National Committee on Careers for Older Americans, 1979). Projects funded at three community colleges--Los Angeles Valley, Miami-Dade, and New York City--and at one university, Pace, have yielded insights into the utilization of retired adults in education and employment settings. The results showed that community colleges could successfully assist older people, especially if these institutions become more proficient as placement services for older workers (NPO/Task Force, 1977).

The Older Americans Program (OAP) of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) "is acting as catalyst assisting community colleges to reverse America's passive acceptance of not only allowing, but encouraging too many aging Americans to assume less responsibility" (DeCrow, 1978, p. 4). The OAP, also funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, is designed to assist community colleges in developing comprehensive programs in cooperation with organizations serving the aging, senior advisory groups and local government, and business and industry, to utilize older Americans' skills, knowledge, energy, and interest. A clearinghouse of program and funding information leading to work opportunities is being organized. Regional and national conferences and periodic publications will provide an exchange of ideas and the network will keep members up to date on the latest developments. The first priority of the OAP is to recruit and hire older people in their institutions. A survey of 547 community colleges showed that 43 percent of the respondents were doing so.

The second priority of the OAP is to set up training programs to help older Americans relocate in the job market or in volunteer positions. The OAP plans to develop senior employment centers as support systems for this relocation venture. They will provide professional and trained peer counselors for counseling and job development services that will focus on the special needs of the older population. They will also educate the community, business, and industry to the advantages to be gained by either hiring back or keeping older adults in productive roles in society (DeCrow, 1978). About twelve community colleges were identified in the OAP survey as having senior employment centers; 139 provided special counseling services for older students.

Other job placement and counseling services have been developed by private groups. The "Good Neighbor" Aide and Training and Placement Program for older women trained to take care of children and older people was organized by the Federation of Women's Clubs in Montgomery County, Maryland. A Senior Home

Craftsman Program which provides workers for minor repairs in private homes was developed with the help of the Washington Building Trades Council and a suburban Maryland Home Builders Association. These are unique employment services not duplicated by or competing with other employment agencies (Aun, 1970).

International Business Machines (IBM) now offers tuition rebates for courses on any topic of interest within three years of retirement and continuing into retirement for its workers. Many workers take courses in preparation for second careers, or to learn new skills, or small business management (Sonnenfeld, 1978).

These programs suggest that vocational educators can look to the private sector for funding and programming for the older adult, as well as to the federal government.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While much of this paper has been devoted to ways in which vocational education can serve the population over 65, there are many ways in which the resources and talents of this population can serve vocational education. The National Committee on Careers for Older Americans of the Academy for Educational Development in Older Americans: An Untapped Resource gives an extensive review of ways of utilizing the services of older people. A few examples that might apply specifically to vocational education follow. Project ASSERT is already applying some of them. Others include: vocational instruction, vocational counseling, career guidance, job developing, job placement, prevocational training, counseling, administrative support for recruitment of volunteers, planning and implementing test programs for the elderly, surveying needs and current status of vocational education and training for older adults, conducting conferences on problems and successes of programs designed for older persons, sponsoring and conducting surveys, and writing reports.

The Rand study assertion that, because of rapid technological change, education is being viewed as a way of meeting objectives of the present is a welcome one to older adults engaged in making the best use of their remaining years. The emphasis of vocational educators on the preparation of youth for employment is borne out by the paucity of literature on vocational education programs for those over 65. In fact, the work of N. A. Sheppard, which provides the only data on the attitudes of vocational educators themselves, indicated that programming for older adults is not a high priority. If educators limit the definition of

vocation to paid employment or participation in the labor force, 90 percent of the population 65 and over is eliminated.

To deal effectively with this over 65 segment of the population, vocational educators will need to acquire new perspectives on their field. More emphasis must be put on that part of the legislative definition of vocational education which calls for the preparation of individuals for unpaid as well as paid employment. This would include education for certain types of volunteer roles which can be construed as second careers. More attention may also have to be paid to the family and consumer roles of those over 65, increasing emphasis on the consumer, homemaking, and career education aspects of vocational education.

Theoretically, retirement opens the doors to a host of new activities. In reality, only a minority of older people seem to reorient their lives in new directions (Manney, 1975, p. 59). For some there is a real desire to disengage, but many others experience a lack of socially defined expectations and lack of direction. Vocational educators can help provide this direction and assist in the engagement of more of those over 65.

If vocational educators are to increase their involvement in programs for the aging, the following recommendations need to be implemented:

1. Vocational educators need to study more about the characteristics of the aging population with particular attention to developments in the field of industrial gerontology.

2. Programs need to be based on the understanding that there is more variation within the over 65 age cohort than between it and other groups on most characteristics. This will lead to a consideration of mainstreaming older adults into ongoing programs rather than planning only in terms of special programs for them. Some of the lessons learned from the mainstreaming of the handicapped might be examined for application to the elderly.

3. The basis of support for vocational education for older adults requires a broader interpretation of "vocation" than is reflected in much of the literature and current programming. "Vocation" for those over 65 means paid employment for only about one in ten. The entire cohort is concerned with making the rest of their lives meaningful both on the job and off.

4. The legislative definitions which include unpaid as well as paid employment as part of vocational education need to be taken seriously, especially for the older age group.

This area is unique to vocational education legislation in comparison to other manpower training programs.

5. For the over 65 cohort, emphasis needs to be placed on all personal roles. Consumer-homemaking has a tremendous potential in serving this age group, as all except the 5 percent who are institutionalized are homemakers in circumstances of reduced income and decreased mobility. Any means of keeping this group in their own homes rather than in institutions would represent a major contribution to society. The opportunity to provide vocational education in dealing with an increasingly complex marketplace of goods and services is almost unlimited.

6. Vocational educators and administrators need to look to the retired population for resources to add enriching dimensions to their own programs. The experience and wisdom of older workers for this purpose should not remain untapped.

7. Vocational educators need to examine thoroughly the legislation for sources of funding for programs. The older age cohorts are becoming politically powerful as advocates for programming to meet their needs and can be strong allies for promoting funding. Educators should look to the reallocation of resources of funds within present patterns where there is flexibility to meet changing societal patterns more effectively.

8. Vocational educators should explore private sources of funding for vocational education programs. There appears to be special interest in the development of community college resources.

9. As a society we need human services, but may not be able to afford them without the contribution of volunteer forces recruited from those who have retired but are still anxious to perform useful work. The successful integration of volunteers into our institutions without displacement of paid workers, along the model of the Sequin study, is a challenge.

10. Vocational educators need to provide models of vocational and personal counseling and job placement, as well as skill training that meet the true "vocational" needs and not just the "job" needs of the older population.

11. Programs to forestall complete retirement by retraining prior to age 65 may partly solve some of the problems of postretirement adjustment.

12. Research is necessary for planning data. A national survey should be conducted of vocational education programs that serve those over 65, including those designed for other groups but which also serve the older age group. This survey should incorporate programs designed and implemented by other agencies that would meet vocational education definitions.

13. Suggestions are being made that program planning for the elderly be centralized in the Administration on Aging. The 1981 White House Conference on Aging will be crucial in terms of planning for the future. Vocational educators must be involved if they are to contribute to the needs of older adults. Vocational educators must take the initiative to make their expertise known to professionals in the area of gerontology. The mention of "vocational education" is conspicuously absent in gerontological literature.

14. Retirement is an important and difficult decision. Vocational education, especially through consumer-homemaking education, can make a contribution in planning for retirement, specially in the area of financial management. It is important that this stage of the life cycle be included in all curriculum planning. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) may push retirement planning into the post-65 years, but indications are that these years will involve some combination of retirement with other activity.

15. Many other issues remain to be dealt with in the area of careers for older adults. Vocational educators should be alert to and involved in the development of and dissemination of the upcoming series of reports planned by the National Committee on Careers for Older Americans.

According to a memorandum from Jarold A. Kieffer, Director, six of the following topics will be developed between 1979 and 1981:

a) Resolving fringe benefit issues in connection with more older workers

b) Adjustments in personnel systems to reflect higher retention rates for older workers and expanded hiring of older people

c) Ways and means of financing and justifying long-term job creation for older workers in both public and private sectors

d) Development of techniques for calculating the growing socioeconomic financial costs of unnecessary dependency conditions and idleness among older people and for assessing the potential gains of longer life

e) Strengthening the role and capacities of public and private employment agencies in older worker counseling and placement

f) Strengthening the role and capacities of educational institutions in enlarging options for older people in paid, self-employed, and volunteer work

g) Facilitating transportation of older persons for job-finding and commuting to jobs found

h) Facilitating the opportunities for older people in self-employment or as employer/entrepreneurs or employees in small businesses

i) Facilitating resolution of teaching/learning and job performance issues in connection with older workers

j) Development or strengthening of community job programs that train or make use of existing skills of older people to help children and youth

The National Committee on Careers for Older Americans does not plan to put much emphasis on the initiation of new research, yet all of these topics need extensive research and development in which vocational educators should not only be involved but take the initiative.

The implementation of these recommendations, in the final analysis, will depend on these factors: the initiative and energy of professional vocational educators with an interest in the needs of those over age 65; large categorical grants from a government convinced that this is a priority; or, political pressure from older adults themselves who press for assistance in meeting their vocational needs.

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